



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

News Release

Pacific Islands External Affairs Office

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For Release: May 9, 2006
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PIEA-06-11
RO-06-048

Twelve Species of Hawaiian Picture-wing Flies Receive Federal Protection

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today extended Federal protection to twelve species of Hawaiian picture-wing flies under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The Service is listing 11 of the fly species as endangered and one as threatened. Each of the 12 Hawaiian picture-wing flies in this action is found only on a single island, and each breeds only on a single or a few related species of plants, some of which are also listed as threatened or endangered species. Six of the picture-wing flies are found on Oahu, three on the island of Hawaii, and one each on Kauai, Molokai, and Maui. One of the Big Island species was thought to be extinct until an extremely small population was rediscovered in 1993.

“More often than not large mammals such as bears, wolves, and manatees receive most of the public’s attention while the importance of insects in our natural world is overlooked,” said David B. Allen, Director of the Service’s Pacific Region. “Studies of Hawaiian picture-wing flies have revealed an incredible evolutionary history that allows people to understand the dynamic adaptive changes that Hawaiian species have undergone.”

There are approximately 106 species of Hawaiian picture-wing flies. Each species is specially adapted to a particular island and a specific habitat type, ranging from desert-like habitats to rain forests and swamplands.

Hawaiian picture-wings have been called the “birds of paradise” of the insect world because of their spectacular displays during courtship and defense of their territories. The picture-wings are known for their elaborate markings on otherwise clear wings, and belong to the intensively studied *Drosophilidae* family. Future conservation efforts will focus on monitoring existing populations and controlling threats to enhance populations of listed species.

The major threats to the 12 species of picture-wing flies are habitat degradation by feral animals such as pigs, loss of host plants, and impacts of non-native insect predators and parasites, including ants and wasps. Furthermore, all of these picture-wing flies are now reduced to just a few populations within localized patches of their host plants, some of which are also listed under ESA.

Those species being listed as endangered are: *Drosophila aglaia*, *Drosophila hemipeza*, *Drosophila montgomeryi*, *Drosophila obatai*, *Drosophila substenoptera*, and *Drosophila tarphytrichia* (all found on Oahu); *Drosophila heteroneura* and *Drosophila ochrobasis* (found on Hawaii); *Drosophila musaphilia* (found on Kauai); *Drosophila differens* (found on Molokai); and *Drosophila neoclavisetae* (found on Maui). The species listed as threatened is *Drosophila muli*, which is found on the island of Hawaii.

Pursuant to a settlement agreement approved by the United States District Court for the District of Hawaii on August 31, 2005, the Service will propose critical habitat for these 12 species by September 15, 2006, and finalize critical habitat by April 17, 2007.

Copies of the final rule may be downloaded from the Service's website at <http://www.fws.gov/pacificislands/>. Copies are also available by calling the Fish and Wildlife Service office in Honolulu at (808) 792-9400.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million- acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices, and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American Tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to State fish and wildlife agencies.

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